

FOOTWEAR STRUCTURE AND METHOD OF FORMING THE SAME

Cross-Reference to Related Applications

JK 5 The present application is a continuation of U.S. application serial number 10/308,320, now U.S. Patent No. 6,701,643 filed December 3, 2002, which is a divisional of U.S. application serial number 09/609,620 filed July 5, 2000, now U.S. Patent No. 6,519,876, which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. application serial number 09/073,292, filed May 6, 1998, now U.S. Patent No. 6,092,305, the entire teachings of each of which are incorporated herein by reference.

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Field of the Invention

The present invention relates in general to footwear structures.

Background of the Invention

15 The ideal footwear design would incorporate the following essential features and characteristics: comfort, cushioning, shock absorption, stability, flexibility, support, good fit, and would also be lightweight. These features are achieved in, and are dependent upon, the structural and functional design elements of the footwear, which enhance the wearer's ability to perform various activities without pain or inconvenience.

20 To date, prior art footwear constructions have failed to successfully combine the essential features of an ideal design. Prior attempts to create the ideal footwear design have been unsuccessful largely because prior structures have emphasized one of the above-noted features to the detriment of others. Furthermore, prior attempts to construct an ideal footwear design have failed to consider the importance of other key features such as industrialized construction, style
25 and fashion.

Prior art footwear constructions that provide cushioning generally have three or four separate parts. First, such conventional footwear designs are provided with an outsole. The outsole is made of a durable material that extends across the lower surface of the shoe and contacts the ground during use to provide traction. The outsole may also have integrally molded
30 full or partial sidewalls extending upwardly around its periphery. Second, a midsole is